DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 453 178 SP 039 978

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TITLE The Role of Teacher in the Classroom Community.
PUB DATE 2001-04-10
NOTE 35p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Seattle, WA, April 10-14, 2001).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Environment; Elementary Secondary Education; *Interpersonal Relationship; Peer Relationship; *Teacher Role; *Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Learning Communities

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the importance of defining the teacher's role in building a classroom community; demonstrates the absence of research on the subject; and determines the potential effects of community on student perceptions of schooling, self-concept, and relationships with peers and teachers. It describes problems in defining teacher role in classroom communities and reviews research on the subject. Finally, it discusses future research, which will describe a conceptual model to define the teacher's role in building a classroom community. The study will also fill gaps in the literature and provide educational practitioners with insight into the importance of developing a sense of classroom community, illustrating which type of teacher behaviors are most beneficial in building and maintaining working classroom communities. The study will examine classrooms in at least four elementary schools and will include teachers with a range of experience. It will assess teacher perceptions of their role in building classroom community. Researchers will observe and document teacher-student and student-student relationships; collect classroom artifacts such as newsletters and student work; and survey and interview students and teachers. An appendix presents a time line for data collection and analysis. (Contains 34 references.) (SM)

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ED 453 178

The Role of Teacher in the Classroom Community

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Paper Presented for the Annual Conference of the
American Educational Research Association
Seattle, Washington
April 10-14, 2001

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Defining the Role of Teacher in the Classroom Community 3

II. Statement of Background and Purpose, Importance and Significance of Defining the Role of Teacher in the Classroom Community 4

III. Statement of the Problematic in Defining the Role of Teacher in the Classroom Community..... 11

IV. A Review of the Literature on the Role of Teacher in the Classroom Community 13

V. Methodological Considerations 25

VI. Conclusion 29

VII. References 31

VIII. Appendix A: Time Line For Data Collection and Analysis 34

I. Defining the Role of Teacher in the Classroom Community

The current body of scholarly literature indicate that a perception exists that children perform better both socially and academically when they attend a school environment that is a safe, caring, structured community with a high level of parental involvement.

While the influence of parental involvement can be a powerful indicator of success, we should hesitate to elevate it to the exclusion of all other factors. It can be argued that much of the motivation to learn is instilled at home on an ongoing basis, and the role of teacher is temporary in the scheme of things, however, the influence of the classroom and teacher should not be trivialized for both are part of an extra-familial setting in which learning is encouraged and takes many forms. Within the classroom walls, there is the learning of content, and there is the learning of relationships, self worth, and a sense of place in societies milieu. Inside this communal setting, students are socialized through a complex process that involves interactions both at school and home. The question that remains is what is the role of the teacher in this classroom community?

It will be the purpose of this paper to accomplish three objectives: 1) To discuss the importance of defining the role of the teacher in building a classroom community and its relevance to the field of teaching; 2) To demonstrate the absence of significant research on the subject of the teachers' role in creating a classroom community; and, 3) To determine the potential effects community has on student perceptions of schooling, self concept and relationships with their peers and their teacher.

II. Statement of Background and Purpose, Importance and Significance of Defining the Role of Teacher in the Classroom Community

Educational Scholars have commented on the remarkable similarity that occurs within and between schools and classrooms. In Life in the Classrooms, (1968) Phillip Jackson noted that one could take any individual, blindfold them, and walk them into any American classroom at midnight so the absence of activity would not give away its' purpose, and they would know that it was a classroom, and know its function. He further reported that there seemed to exist within classrooms, "a ritualistic sameness..." John Goodlad supported this assertion in his work, A Place Called School (1984) where he reported on the similarities in the mode of instruction, and commented on "the dreary sameness in classroom processes..." that he witnessed in schools. Larry Cuban resounded similar sentiments in his book, How Teacher Taught (1984) where he not only noted the homogeneity in current teacher practices, but "the persistence of teaching practices over time". In their work, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge (1966), Berger and Luckman speak of the comfort that is brought about through "habituation", and that familiarity reduces conflict.

However, the classroom is not is simplistic as it might seen, rather it is a "complex of multiple contexts" (Dillon 1988, P. 56) in which transpire diverse processes. The classroom setting is a dynamic environment within which action and reaction occur continually. Some actions are easily observable, and some are difficult to perceive. Each action and subsequent reaction is part of a process, which may or may not include the acts of teaching and learning.

Ralph Tyler states in The Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction (1949) that "education is a process of changing the patterns of people's thinking, feeling and overt action". He also argues that learning is the result of an interaction between the learner and external conditions. If the purpose of schooling is to provoke a change in the thought and actions of the learner, and this process occurs as the result of actions, reactions and interactions between the learner and "external conditions" it would benefit the field of teaching, and those who practice it, to know what conditions are optimal for learning to occur, and what role the teacher plays in bringing such conditions about.

To simplify this notion of action, interaction and reaction, in his work, Approaches to Teaching, Gary Fenstermacher presents a mathematical formula to express such processes: TøSxy. The equation can be read the Teacher (T) Teaches (ø) the Student (S) some Subject Matter (X) to achieve some Purpose (Y). Fenstermacher uses this relatively simplistic formula in an attempt to define a very complex process, and in his attempt he fails to acknowledge the context within which these interactions occur.

In its simplest form, what goes on within the walls of the classroom could be broken down into a behavioristic concept of stimulus/response. For example, the teacher gives a specific directive to the students (e.g. Come and sit down on the rug.) and the students react (e.g. they sit on the rug, or conversely, do something other than sit on the rug). Such physical actions and reactions are easy to verify because they can be assessed through direct observation. The

teacher verbalizes the request, (observable) and the students react either through compliance, or non-compliance (also observable).

However, some actions, reactions, and interactions within the classroom are in fact, impossible to perceive. For example, a teacher may attempt to assess student understanding of a concept by asking if there are any questions. Students may react by not raising their hands, but have no understanding what so ever of the subject matter. Or the teacher may ask the students to reflect on what a idea or notion presented to them and prompt them to raise their hand if they understand, agree, remember, etc. The act or raising or refraining from raising ones hand is readily observable, but the process of a student recalling, reflecting or remembering is not possible to observe in its purity. Instead the teacher receives a distilled or even deceptive response that may or may not indicate what a student actually knows.

Students also respond to each other as well as the environmental conditions of the classroom in what can become a lengthy chain of action, interaction and reaction in an effort to achieve some desired result. For example, while responding to a writing prompt given by the teacher (action/reaction) a student may experience the need to sharpen his/her pencil because the led has broken (action) so he asks the teacher for permission to sharpen the pencil (re-action) the teacher says no, reinforcing a classroom expectation that students should remain seated during class-time (interaction) so in response, the student asks his neighbor to borrow a pencil (reaction) and the neighboring student complies by providing a pencil (re-action) and the student continues writing his essay (interaction). This chain of action, reaction and interaction

in the classroom demonstrates that context is an important element that must be considered in educational settings, and that the behaviors and actions which occur within that context can serve either educative or non-educative purposes. However to attempt to describe the process of either teaching and/or learning without first having a solid understanding of the context is to paint without a canvas.

The complexity of the classroom, and the relationships and interaction that occur within it demand a closer look at the context. Fenstermacher's formula did not take into account the context in which teaching and learning occur. A formula striving to be more accurate would take into account as much of the teaching/learning behaviors that can possibly be measured. Such a formula would have to calculate the interactions that occur between teacher and student, student and student, within the classroom to achieve some desired result (i.e. learning). A mathematical rendering of this dynamic interaction might look something like this: $\frac{T\emptyset(S_1\emptyset S_2)X}{C} = Y$

This equation can be read the Teacher (T) Interacts (ø) with a Student (S_1) who in turn interacts with another Student or Students (S_2) over some Subject Matter (X) within the some Environment (C) to achieve some Purpose (Y). The interactions that occur within the classroom between students and teacher, and students and each other, over some subject matter result in a development of a sense of place and can be considered the rudiments of community and relatedness within the classroom.

Why should we examine the teachers' role in building a classroom community? The answer comes to us in various forms. There is a growing perception that schools need to do more in an effort to teach and instill in our students certain ethics and values that are deemed essential in a democratic civilized society. There are those who are fearful that schools are dangerous places for children to be, and provide data that tally thefts, threats, acts of violence and suicide committed by students as validation for such claims (Lickona, T. (1998). Character Education: Seven Crucial Issues. Action-in-Teacher-Education; v20 n4 p77-84). Additionally, in 1995 the California Department of Education (CDE) was one of four state education agencies to be awarded a four-year Partnership Grant for Character Education from the United States Department of Education. One component of the Partnership Grant was to provide guidance and resources for California teachers, schools, and districts interested in implementing character education in their curriculum and instruction. Consequently, the California Character Education Clearinghouse was established to review character education materials based on standards set forth in the California State Board of Education's curriculum frameworks, the publication, *Handbook on the Rights and Responsibilities of School Personnel and Students in the Areas of Providing Moral, Civic, and Ethical Education, Teaching About Religion, Promoting Responsible Attitudes and Behaviors, and Preventing and Responding to Hate Violence,* and current research in the area of character education.

A strong curriculum is an important part of an instructional program. However, the development of character is a difficult thing to measure. Questions of how to assess such virtues as honesty, courage, perseverance, loyalty, caring, civic virtue, justice, respect and

responsibility, and trustworthiness become problematic – while standardized assessments may be effective in measure certain basic skills, they are ineffective in measuring something as essential as the cultivation of character traits. There exists a perception that these traits are not innate and can only be acquired by students through teaching and practice in the home and in the schools. Values, and virtues, must be transmitted to be internalized.

It can be argued that there need not be a separate curriculum to teach civil behavior. Character can be nurtured through the development of respect and relationships within the classroom. Children developing these concepts, however, do not learn them by reacting solely to a set of principles, rules, or a curriculum. Therefore, it is a significant function for educators, therefore, to help socialize children into adults who demonstrate civil conduct, and who understand why civilized behavior is important. This process of socialization can be compared to what Dewey referred to as collateral learning or what Phillip Jackson called the latent or hidden curriculum. In either case, over time, the external controls and expectations set upon children in their learning environments have the potential to become internalized and assimilated as a part of the child's internal values and beliefs. There is much that has been written about the merits of various parenting styles and their impact on student learning, socialization and sense of self worth. It will be the purpose of this paper to demonstrate the absence of significant research on the subject of the teachers' role in creating a classroom community and to determine the potential effects community has on student perceptions of schooling, self concept and relationships with their peers and their teacher.

Two studies that highlight the significant effect that the teacher has on student self concept, desire to achieve and relationships with other students can be found in Ryan and Stillers' work, The Social Contexts of Internalization (1991) and Skinner and Belmont's study, Motivation in the Classroom: The Reciprocal Effect of Teacher Behavior (1993). Ryan and Stiller discuss the three psychological needs that a child brings with them into their learning environments, and classifies them as autonomy, competence and relatedness. A child's need of autonomy is met when they are given choices in their learning, their need for competence is met when they are given feed back from their parent, teacher or peers as to how successful or unsuccessful they are, and the need for relatedness occurs when the child begins to feel a sense of belonging to a group (the family, the classroom). These needs are either nurtured or suppressed depending upon the learning environments. This is similar to Rogoff's concept that a child enters the world with an innate curiosity and motivation to learn, and that the caregivers (teachers or parents) can either nurture or extinguish this desire. Skinner and Belmont examined the effects of teacher behaviors on student motivation. They classified teacher behaviors as involvement, autonomy support and structure. What the researchers found was that these teacher behaviors led to either engagement on the part of the student or disaffection. Interestingly, it was found that if the teacher perceives the child as being withdrawn, or obstinate, the teacher will withdraw positive behaviors (i.e. involvement, autonomy support and structure) that would otherwise possibly induce motivation in the child. The power of this study is that it demonstrates the reciprocal effects of teacher student interaction. If a teacher perceives a child to be motivated, they feed and nurture that behavior. If they perceive a child to be withdrawn, they to withdraw, causing the child to withdraw even further. The authors describe this as the rich get richer and the poor get poorer effect. This study can be used to demonstrate to

teachers the power of the interactions that they have with their students, they can encourage and motivate students to learn through their interactions, autonomy support and classroom structure; and the students, the study shows, react positively to that type of interaction.

III. Statement of the Problematic in Defining the Role of Teacher in the Classroom Community

As mentioned in the introduction, it is the purpose of this paper accomplish three objectives: 1) To discuss the importance of Defining the Role of Teacher in the Classroom Community and its relevance to the field of teaching; 2) To demonstrate the absence of significant research on the subject of the teachers' role in creating a classroom community; and, 3) To determine the potential effects community has on student perceptions of schooling, self concept and relationships with their peers and their teacher.

As demonstrated earlier, Fenstermacher made an attempt to describe the interactions that occur between teacher and students, but neglected to take into account the context (environment) of those interactions and the depth of actions and interactions that may not be readily perceivable. In light of this, an alternative formula was offered as a more comprehensive lens through which to examine classroom interactions: $\frac{T\varnothing(S_1\varnothing S_2)X}{C} = Y$.

In order to understand the culture of the classroom, and what characteristics make a classroom a community, one must identify all of the players that make up that community and define their

roles within it (What is the role of T and S_1 and S_2 ?). However, before one can set the task of identifying the individual roles within the classroom community, one must first come to understand what is meant by the term community, and how it applies to the classroom (What are the elements that make (C) a community?). What strategies can be used to develop community in the classroom? What are the dynamics between teacher and student ($T \varnothing (S_1 \varnothing S_2)$ that make the classroom more of a community and less of a bureaucracy? How are interactions between a teacher and student different from a manager and employee? What significance do student interactions with other students ($S_1 \varnothing S_2$) play in the classroom community? These are questions that have yet to be answered by the current body of literature and warrant a full measure of examination to truly understand what role the teacher plays in developing a community within the walls of their classroom.

IV. A Review of the Literature on the Role of Teacher in the Classroom Community

A review of literature regarding the role of the teacher in building a classroom community reveals that much has been written on classroom culture and the importance establishing a sense of community within the school. For example, in The Family, Education and Society, Musgrove makes a case for the moral function of education when he argues that the purpose of the school is "the pursuit of truth..." and "is a piece of social machinery with the power to unite society or divide it" (Musgrove 1966: 70-71). There is also a growing emphasis on the importance of developing partnerships between the child's school and home. Ernest Boyer argued in The Basic School that fostering "community" in elementary schools is essential for effective schooling in the early grades. "The Basic School is above all else, a community for learning, a place where staff and students, along with parents, have a shared vision of what the institution is seeking to accomplish" (Boyer, 1995). Boyer stresses throughout his work that building community is the first priority of the Basic School. He further states that a school becomes a community for learning when it is: "a purposeful place, a communicative place, a just place, a disciplined place, a caring place and a celebrative place"(Boyer, 1995).

Contemporary research on building parent-school relationships has focused primarily on the academic benefits for children, the bulk of which has been co-relational in form. For example, in their 1992 study, Christenson and Conoley discovered that parental involvement appears to be associated with increases in student achievement, not only at the elementary school level, but through middle and high school as well (Christenson & Conoley, 1992). The benefits to

building enduring parent-school relationships are not limited solely to students. In their 1995 study, Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler and Burrow found that "in addition to strengthening parent/teacher relationships, parent involvement in children's education, contributed to their perceptions of success as parents" (Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Bassler, O.C., Burrow, R., 1995: 435-450). They further argue that, "... improving parental involvement and participation, though complex and demanding, has the potential to improve the quality of education for students of all ages and to benefit parents and staff." (Hoover-Dempsey, 1995). Such a sense of community in schools can promote a variety of positive outcomes for students.

In their work, "The High School as Community: Contextual Influences and Consequences for Students and Teachers," Bryk and Driscoll focused on specific communal features of high schools. The philosophical and social perspectives of the school as a community are explored, and the school is viewed as a social organization consisting of cooperative adults who share a common purpose and where daily life for both adults and students is formed by shared values and a common agenda of activities. Bryk and Driscoll found that communally organized schools have fewer problems with student misbehavior (e.g., class cutting, student absenteeism) than do other schools (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988). Students in these schools also showed more interest in academics and greater achievement gains, and they dropped out at lower rates.

The literature explored thus far speaks volumes to the importance of community in schools, and goes into detail about how schools can be better structured to draw in parent participation and community involvement. If the purpose of schools is to "pursue truth"(Musgrove 1966:71) as Musgrove suggests, and the first priority of the school as Boyer indicates is to

"establish community"(Boyer, 1995), then much more can been written that addresses the role of the teacher in establishing a sense of community within his/her classroom so that students and teacher can "pursue truth" together. More needs to be written that addresses this gap in educational research. If a students' sense of community is related to their engagement in school activities, academic success, self perception and relationships with peers and adults, important questions need to be considered that get to the heart of the culture that exists inside of the classroom.

An examination of the literature does not readily provide one with a universally accepted definition of the term community. As Getzels points out, the problem lies in the definition of the term itself (Getzels 1979: 98-101). New York: Teachers College Press). Often when one seeks to place community in a definitional context, one gets not a definition but a description. A community can be viewed in geographical terms, such as Palm Springs, or the barrio, or New Yorkers. A community can also refer to collective interests; wrestling fans, art critics, Democrats or Republicans. It has also been used to describe ethnic groups as, the Latino Community, the Black Community, Englishmen, etc (Getzels, 1979). To use community in these contexts waters down the richness of its meaning; it implies sameness and diminishes the uniqueness and the cross sections of interests within these groups.

Although the discussion of community is plagued by vague generalizations, a number of researchers have attempted to identify the fundamental attributes of healthy and vital school communities. For Anthony Bryk and Mary Driscoll (Bryk & Driscoll 1988), the communally

organized school is characterized by a system of shared values related to the school and to education in general; common activities that link school members to each other and to the school's traditions; and an "ethos of caring" in interpersonal relations, evidenced by collegial interactions among staff members and an extended role for teachers that encompasses more than classroom instruction.

Applying the concept of community to the classroom setting is met with difficulty when one considers the nature of the organizational system of which it is a part. The classroom is part of a very large organizational construct. The classroom is a part of a school, which is a part of a school district, which is overseen by an elected school board and a presiding superintendent, which receives directives from both voters, and the state legislature. In a nutshell, the classroom could be viewed as a cog in the bureaucratic machine. Yet, remarkably, it also functions like a community. In his book, Building Community in Schools (1994), Thomas Sergiovanni discusses the importance of the school reflecting a sense of community rather than bureaucratic characteristics. He sites Cusick's work on school structures: "by their function, the bureaucratic element of schools absorb students' time, but not their energy" (Sergiovanni 1994: 120-127). In the late 20th century, Tonnies described such a relationship as *Gesellschaft* or an impersonalized bureaucratized structure. This approach to educational homogeny, in the end, will drive the students away from their studies and back into the folds of their subcultures (Serrgiovanni, 1994:121). What is left cannot be viewed as an educational community, but a culturally fragmented organization.

In her article "Postmodernism and Community in Schools: Unraveling the Paradox", (Furman, 1998: 318), Gail Furman points out that educators too have become confused with "the widespread use of the term *community* without critical analysis of its theoretical underpinnings" (Furman, 1998: 316). Furman suggests that the model we have been using may not be a valid one. The difficulty here is that community in the traditional sense, implies sameness. In the increasingly multi-cultural landscape of the American Public school system, sameness is non-existent. To attend the diverse nature of the modern public school, Furman recommends a development of a school wide culture that recognizes and promotes acceptance of differences. This concept for the *postmodern community school* she bases on three fundamental tenants of community:

> (1) It is based on the ethics of acceptance of otherness with respect, justice, and appreciation and of peaceful cooperation within difference; (2) It is inspired by the metaphor of global community; and (3) It is fostered by a process that promote among its members the feelings of belonging, trust of others, and safety (p318).

Sergiovanni suggests that schools need to become purposeful communities instead of bureaucracies. To do this, schools must first develop a "community of mind that binds them to a shared ideology" (Sergiovanni, 1994:72). Uniting the school together and committing to a set of core values transform the school into a community that is guided by a set of beliefs in the importance of scholarship and respect.

By applying Furman's tenants of a post modern community to the classroom and Sergiovanni's view of the community mind, we find not only a theme of relationships and values, but a framework for defining a classroom community. A classroom community is a place in which all of the participants are united in the belief that scholarship is something to be valued, and that

differences of opinion are welcomed, and the classroom is a place where all participants can feel safe, respected, and a sense of belonging. With the theoretical framework of the classroom community established, we turn to the literature to discover what role the teacher plays in this classroom community.

The behaviorist B.F. Skinner perceived the teachers role as fundamentally mechanical. (Skinner, B.F., The Technology of Teaching. New York: Appleton, 1968). According to Skinner, the teacher is merely the one who "arranges the contingencies of reinforcement" under which the students are automatically conditioned toward specified behaviors (Skinner, 1968: 249-256). Under such a model, the teacher is nothing more than a stimulus and the student's actions are reduced to a reflex. In order to better understand the question for research, literature from several areas has been examined. From the review, three metaphorical themes describing the role of teacher have consistently re-emerged. The first is the role of the teacher as a gardener; the second is the teacher as the monitor, and finally, the teacher as the sustainer of curiosity.

The literature has provided some insight into the role of the teacher and classroom structure. For example, at the turn of the century, Horace Mann spent six weeks visiting Prussian schools and observing the interaction between the schoolmaster and the student. In his seventh annual report, Mann recounts the relationship he saw between teacher and pupil in the Prussian schools, and disparaged American schoolmasters for their lack of compassion. In the Prussian schools, he noted that the children were nurtured by teachers whom he referred to as "sweet and humanizing influences" (Cremin 1962: 45-49). He equated the Prussian teachers to parents "without the foolish doting or indulgences" (Cremin 1962: 49). The teacher regarded the

students with a sense of duty first, then affection. The teachers in the Prussian schools were prone to clapping with joy when a student gave a correct response, or even catching a student up into his arms in an embrace. The role of the teacher here was to nurture, praise, and sustain the students' desire to learn truths.

Through his works, Mann expressed his belief in the integral relationship between freedom, popular education, and republican government. Mann repeatedly expressed with passion the notion that a nation cannot long remain ignorant and free. The role that the teacher plays in ensuring this freedom is of great importance. In his fourth annual report, Mann discusses the notion of teacher qualifications. He speaks to the "aptness to teach", and how the ability to acquire and the ability to impart are two wholly different talents. The aptness to teach must go beyond knowledge of method and process. "He who is apt to teach is acquainted not only with common methods for common minds, but peculiar methods for pupils with peculiar dispositions"(p48).

In his book The Call to Teach (1995), David Hansen makes the point that the true role of the teacher is not easily defined. Efficiency and instant success are the domineering expectations in the current culture, and out of this view spring forth growth metaphors – grow rich, grow the business, etc. Hansen states that these views are bogus. Growth implies something steadier and more long term – something requiring patience and know how – like that of a gardener growing delicate plants. Hansen visits several schools and observes many teachers that he describes as "people who are so patient and so little interested in instant success that their work needs to be explained" (Hansen, 1995: 86-87) in light of the dominant materialism. He describes one

teacher who comes to school every day well dressed, with his demeanor manifesting a sense of respect at every level: for himself; for his role in the school; and for his students (Hansen, 1995). Hansen also speaks of the role that virtue plays in the role of the teacher; it is not pure process, but something of substance. The role of teacher is not that of the behaviorist who believes that teaching is a science, rather the teacher in Hansen's view is the patient gardener who has willingly submitted to a discipline for the sake of a greater good. The teacher's role in the classroom is to educate the young, and get the message across that virtue matters.

Herbert Thelen had a much different view of both the teacher and the students. The classroom, according to Thelen, resembled to the larger society. It has social order; a culture and the inhabitants care about the expectations and standards that develop there. The social process of inquiry, not reflex or rote application of the subject matter is the source of true learning. This approach is akin to John Dewey's recommendation that the entire school be organized as a miniature democracy (Dewey, J., 1916., Democracy and Education (1 ed.): Macmillan Publishing, Co). Through this approach, students participate in the development of the social system of the classroom, and gradually learn to conduct themselves as citizens in a democracy.

In The Classroom Society, Thelen defines the classroom as having many of the same properties of a small society (Thelen 1981: 100-102), namely a task force (the students working on lessons); organization and social order (the teacher giving instructions and establishing parameters of acceptable behavior; and psyche-groups i.e. students in self selected groupings). The role of the teacher, Thelen argues, is that of a monitor. He monitors the kind of knowledge that is expressed in the content of classroom dialogue. He monitors the organization of the

class and helps the class diagnose its purpose. The teacher's most important role in the classroom society is to reinforce whatever tendencies have the greatest educative potential (Thelen, 1981:171), and conversely reject any tendencies that lack educative purpose.

In Rosario, Macairan's study of community schools in Maasin, she found that the schools were essential in bringing the larger community together and helping them to realize that, "they were part and parcel of the community schools on their respective barrios" (Macairan, R. (1966). The Community Schools in Maasin, Southern Leyete and their Role in the Uplift of Living Conditions in the Barrios. Dissertation, University of San Carlos, San Carlos). In contrast, Herbert Hamlin, a staunch school advisory supporter, emphasizes the tendency of schools to become isolated from the communities they are intended to serve. He recommends the development of an advisory committee as a positive step toward linking the school to the community.

> "Many schools are literally insulated from their communities. They are pedagogic islands, cut off from the channels of convention from the world which surrounds them, and the inhabitants of these islands rarely venture to cross these channels during school hours... few schools have built bridges over which people may freely pass back and forth between school and community" (Kelly 1977: 17-18).

Schools cannot afford to become isolated from their communities. The professional educator must keep in touch with his community. Gail Furman would advise that the best way for a school to construct such a bridge would be to approach the task from the perspective of teaching to a global community, and the demarcation between "us" and "them" would vanish.

The literature has provided some insight into the role of the teacher within the classroom community. However, it has been argued "progressive teachers are alert to the possibilities of group planning and use it as a successful teaching technique" (Everett, S. (1938). The Community School (1 ed.). New York: Appelton- Century Company). If a teacher is going to encourage the notion of community, his/her role must often extend outside the walls of the classroom. This not only requires the teacher to be sensitive to the needs and conditions of the community, but to also be a catalyst for change.

In a recent study on parent involvement in schools, James Griffith examines the relationship between school structure and parental involvement (Griffith, J., 1998., The Relation of School Structure and Social Environment to Parent Involvement in Elementary Schools. The Elementary School Journal, 99(1), 55-77). The purpose of his study was to examine the effect of parent perceptions of the school environment on the individual's involvement in the school (Griffith 1998: 55). The results could then be used to identify the motivational basis for parent involvement, and lead to the design of interventions that would increase parent participation in school. Griffith identifies several predictors of parent involvement. The strongest were the variables of racial/ethnic identity, socio-economic status, parental expectations for the child's future education, and school climate. Griffith contends that parents are more likely to become more involved in their child's school if they perceive that the administrators and teachers welcome their involvement (1998: 77).

According to Griffith, parents are more likely to become more proactive in their child's education – regardless of race, or economic status, if they perceive that the school officials

(teachers and administrators) welcome their participation. Griffith argues that schools can do more to encourage parents to become more active in their child's education. He asserts that teachers often alienate lower income parents with little education in favor of parents who are better educated. Griffith challenges teachers to do more to help make parents feel that their presence is welcome at the schools. By making an effort to increase their understanding of parent involvement, teachers can create more benevolent atmosphere for parents and optimal learning environment for students.

The literature suggests that within the context of a classroom community both the teacher and the students have specific roles. According to Lois Bridges (Bridges, 1996), the student should take a more assertive role in their education. That is, they should be free to make choices about their learning, from what books they read to the work samples they include in their portfolios. This liberty in learning does require the teacher to relax their grip a little and allow the students to make decisions about curriculum. This requires restraint on the part of the teacher, and a mature perception of scholarship on the part of the student. Both can be achieved if the teacher is responsive to student interests. If a teacher sees that a student has developed a curiosity, they should seize it as an opportunity for a teaching moment.

Bridge's democratic approach to teaching ties into Thelen's view of the student role as that of the investigator who identifies perplexities, and explores ways of solving them. The teacher must make efforts to reinforce educative tendencies of the class. A teacher must be capable of nurturing and sustaining a child's desire to know about the world around them. In his work, The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change, Seymour Sarason discusses the

importance of resources in the classroom (Sarason 1996). A teacher must be able to recognize the valuable human resources he has around him/her – namely the parents. The parents are more than just a part of a teacher's constituency; they are a vital resource as well. He suggests opening a dialogue with parents early, so that one knows how best to make use of their uniqueness in the classroom. For example, if it is known that a parent can play a musical instrument, invite them to participate in a music lesson. If a parent is skilled in other areas, find a way to bring their expertise into the classroom. This will strengthen the bond between them and the school, as well as sustain the interest of the students.

Thus far, the literature pertaining to the teacher's role in the classroom community speaks clearly to the expectations set for learners, and it even outlines a framework for the structure of the classroom to best approximate a democratic society. However, much more can be said in terms of what role the teacher should play in the development of a community classroom. When interacting with their students, how do teachers conduct themselves in a manner that learning is nurtured and sustained, community is strengthened and behaviors that diminish learning are minimized?

By specifically identifying the characteristics of the teacher's role in the classroom, one can take care to conduct oneself in a manner that sustains educative tendencies. For example, if one took to extreme the views of Skinner, the relationship between teacher and student would be narrowed to that of stimulus-response. Conversely, if one were to adopt unconditionally Thelen's views on the importance of rules and order, one could mistake the classroom for an organizational system. Both extremes leave little room for the intimacy required for building a

caring, education-oriented community. A review of the literature demonstrates that the teacher is not a programmer, the student is not a mechanism, nor is the classroom a bureaucracy. Rather, the context of the classroom community and those that compose it are something distinct, and the role that the teacher plays in it is one that warrants further investigation.

V. Methodological Considerations for Study

Having determined what needs to be known, it is now necessary to discuss the specifics of how the question can be answered. Since the purpose of this study is to define the role of the teacher in building a classroom community, the nature of the question indicates that it will be beneficial to conduct a more qualitative research design. In his work, The Ethnographic Interview (1979) J.P. Spradley described ethnographic research as "a means for understanding culture through the native experience" and differentiated it as "a practice of not studying people, but learning from them". It is the hopes of this author to learn from those in the classroom what role the teacher plays in the classroom community and its relevance to the field of teaching; and to determine the effects community within the classroom has on student perceptions of schooling, self concept and relationships with their peers and their teacher. The benefits of applying an ethnographic research design to this study lies in its methods. The researcher believes that subtle nuances and an insight into the teachers' role in building a classroom community will be gained through observation, interviews and collection of artifacts (i.e. triangulation) that a more quantative design might miss.

In conducting an ethnographic study, after selecting the population, there are four characteristics in the research design that help to increase its validity: observation, interviews, artifacts and analysis. The first step is the selection of groups for the study. Since I am interested in defining the role of teacher in building a classroom community, it stands to reason that I will be examining teachers. The question goes deeper than just the teacher, but also seeks to examine the effects different classroom communities might have on student perceptions of schooling, self concept and relationships with their peers and their teacher - this would mandate that I also examine students. In order to carry out this study in a manner that best addresses the question, it is important to look at more than one school and more than one classroom. For the purpose of defining the role of teacher in building a classroom community, it will be helpful to examine primary and upper grade classrooms at no less than four elementary schools. In order to reduce confounders as a result of socio-economic differences, an effort will be made to ensure that demographics are taken into account, and both Title I and non-Title I schools will be examined.

Participation in the study is of course voluntary. However, teachers will be sought out who represent a range of experience. Research has suggested that teachers' ways of viewing the classroom and managing its dilemmas are largely based on their own level of classroom experience. (Berlinger 1987; Rottenberg & Berliner 1990). The aim of this study is not to differentiate between experienced and inexperienced teachers views in building community, however experience in the classroom, and teacher training may play varying roles, and it would be negligent not to consider them.

The study will proceed in six phases: 1) Assessment of teacher perceptions of teacher roles in building the classroom community; 2) Observation and documentation of teacher to student and student to student interactions in the classroom, maintaining transcripts of interactions; 3) Collection of artifacts in the classroom community (i.e. newsletters, copy of the classroom rules, student generated artifacts, etc); 4) Student and teacher surveys; 5) Final interviews with students and teacher; and 6) analysis. In her work Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach (1988), Sharan Merriam tells us that as a rule of thumb, analysis takes twice as long as the collection of data. She suggests that data collection and analysis should occur simultaneously. As the researcher moves from the first to the final stage, the research be analyzed and evaluated throughout the progression. Data will be categorized as it is collected, the field notes, interview transcripts and artifacts will be organized in a logical chronological order. Themes will be identified as they emerge and if the researcher is fortunate, a theory will develop that makes sense of all the data.

During the first phase, each teacher will participate in a structured interview after which the researcher will study the transcripts to determine the teachers' perception of their classroom and their sense of purpose in building a community within it. Any need for clarification will be noted and followed up in the final interview (phase 5). During the second phase, the researcher will observe the teachers interacting with their students over a course of one week documenting all perceivable interactions between the teacher and students, student and teacher as well as interactions between students. During the third phase, the researcher will endeavor to collect artifacts from the classroom community such as classroom newsletters, copies of the classroom and school rules, parent communications and samples of student work. The artifacts will then

be organized in a logical chronological order and categorized according to the degree to which they promote community within the classroom. During the fourth phase, the researcher will administer a survey to both teachers and students in an effort to gain insight into their perceptions of the importance of community in the classroom, and the degree to which they feel that they are a part of a functional classroom community. The surveys will be structured on a five point Likert scale; any clarifications that need to be made will be addresses during the final interviews. During the fifth phase the researcher will conduct final interviews with the students and each teacher. The researcher will share findings with the participants, and ask the participants to affirm or refine the researchers interpretation of their view of their classroom community and their role in it. The final phase will be the researchers final analysis of the data. The time line for data collection and analysis is given in Appendix A.

The potential pitfalls to this study fall into three main categories: Researcher/Observer Bias; Participant Bias; and Loss of Anonymity. It is essential that any researcher be fair, just and ethical in the conduct of researching and reporting their findings, however, there always remains the potential that a researchers bias might or predispositions might color their objectivity or lead to a misinterpretation of the findings. Participant Bias can occur when the actors respond to a question in a certain way, or, behave in a particular manner to paint a picture or even gain favor in the eyes of the researcher. Loss of anonymity can be a larger problem, especially when working with children. In conducting ethnographic research, the researcher will have almost intimate contact with the participants of the study. Invisibility is not possible. If the results reported are not favorable, members of the group (i.e. teachers) risk scrutiny or the discomfort of social sanctions if their actions are not deemed desirable.

To guard against such pitfalls, the researcher will take care to employ safeguards to protect the study and the participants. The problem with bias can be taken into account with the application of ethical standards, and effective use of triangulation as a means of both identifying themes as they emerge and inconsistencies should they arise. The researcher will also take into account potential confounders and report them in the study, as well as consider the impact of researcher presence on group dynamics. Lastly, the researcher will protect the right to privacy of all participants by providing full disclosure prior to the study, so each participant understands what is involved and determine whether or not they wish to participate. If they do wish to proceed, the researcher will make effective use of coding in reporting the results to maintain a high degree of anonymity. Through the rigorous applications of such interventions, the researcher can minimize the potential for contamination of this study.

VI. Conclusion

Although the classroom at a school site is a part of a larger community, the context of the classroom, in which the interactions between teacher and student build or diminish a sense of community is not fully understood. The complexity of the classroom community is due to the fact that it accommodates a vast assortment of elements, each housing its own complex array of factors. Dillon (1988) provides a rather comprehensive classification of classroom components, which include the seven elements of teacher, learner, subject matter, activity, aim, result and milieu. These take us a long way in understanding the complexity of the classroom

setting. However, the classroom holds many things and different kinds of things. In order to define, let alone understand the role of the teacher in building a sense of community within the classroom, more work needs to be done.

The question for research is: "What is the role of the teacher in building a classroom community?" The literature of the teacher role in the classroom community speaks clearly to the expectations set for learners, and it even outlines a framework for the structure of the classroom to best approximate a democratic society. However, much more can be said in terms of what role the teacher should play in establishing the community classroom. This study promises to be significant for three reasons. First, it will describe a conceptual model to define the role of the teacher in building a classroom community, which will serve to enrich the sparse literature on the role of teacher in the classroom community. Second, this study will fill the gaps that remain in the literature, and provide educational practitioners an insight to the importance of developing a sense of community in their classrooms, and perhaps even illustrate which type of teacher behaviors are most beneficial in building and maintaining working classroom communities. Third, if this conceptual model can be appropriately used to examine how teachers are trained in the broad concepts of classroom management and effective instructional strategies, as a result, practices of instruction, evaluation, and teacher education will then be implicated.

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Appendix A: Time Line For Data Collection and Analysis

Date	District	School Sites	Procedures
July, 2001	One	A	Structured Interview
August	One	A	Field Work Observation, Collection of Artifacts & Surveys
September	Two	B	Structured Interview
October	Two	B	Field Work Observation, Collection of Artifacts & Surveys Ongoing Analysis
November	Three	C	Structured Interview
December	Three	C	Field Work Observation, Collection of Artifacts & Surveys Ongoing Analysis
January	Four	D	Structured Interview
February	Four	D	Field Work Observation, Collection of Artifacts & Surveys Ongoing Analysis
March	One, Two, Three, Four	A,B,C,D	Final Interviews
April			Final Analysis and Reporting of Results
May			Report Results